

Toronto BIA Diversity & Inclusion Messaging and Recommendations

The following outlines a recommended approach to addressing the ongoing social movement related to police violence, systemic racism and the need to prioritize diversity and inclusion of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community.

OVERVIEW

Toronto's business community is influential and integral to the success and well-being of all residents. As such, customers, neighbours and community members will be looking to the business community for its position on and ultimately its action in fighting systemic racism. Acknowledging that systemic racism exists and identifying key, actionable steps that individual businesses and organizations can take is an important step in creating positive change in Toronto and across Canada.

RECOMMENDED STATEMENT

The [Board and staff] of the [BIA NAME] acknowledge that systemic racism and violence against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in Toronto is deeply ingrained in our collective history and remains pervasive in the daily lives of many people in our country, our province, our city and our neighbourhood. This is unacceptable and we are committed to standing with the BIPOC community and against systemic racism.

The [BIA NAME] board, staff and members are actively taking steps to ensure our organization provides a safe environment for the BIPOC community, free from racism and discrimination. We acknowledge that we can and must do better and we will be working with our partners to dismantle racism and support the BIPOC community to create a safer, more inclusive community.

ACTIONABLE STEPS TO CONSIDER

- **Create clear and explicit anti-racism policies** that outline zero tolerance towards any hateful, racist and discriminatory words or actions that occur within your organization. Encourage individual businesses and organizations to develop and implement such policies as well.
- **Hire a Diversity & Inclusion Consultant** to provide direct feedback and specific recommendations for addressing your organization's specific D&I needs and hiring practices.
- **Conduct implicit bias training** for all BIA members and encourage them to commit to the same training for the employees at their individual businesses and organizations.
- **Encourage members to commit to the 15% pledge**, where applicable - Retailers are being asked to commit a minimum 15% of shelf space to BIPOC-owned businesses. Additionally, seek out and hire BIPOC vendors, consultants, contractors, etc.
- **Inform and promote Black Designers of Canada** The purpose of Black Designers of Canada, a registered non-profit organization, is to both celebrate its designers as well as offer business owners, retailers, buyers, stylists and others an all-inclusive on-going resource of black talent supported and championed by our fellow Canadians hungry for change
- **Make your commitments known** - along with the above statement, outline the exact steps your organization is going to take and share these on your website.

SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

- Do not share any statement of support until your organization has outlined actionable steps that will be taken and ensure that you have reached out to your current BIPOC employees to

address any concerns they may have. Please be mindful of power dynamics and thoughtfully engage in this conversation in a manner that employees will be comfortable and not fear repercussions.

- Share your organization’s statement supporting the BIPOC community and a link to the steps you will be taking.
- Acknowledge and respond to criticism swiftly. Please note, below we’ve included sample responses but it is important that you do not respond the same way each time, adjust the language appropriately.
 - Comment from an employee/customer/etc sharing their experience of racism at your company or organization - *“We apologize for the hurt we caused. We are committed to dismantling racism in our community and would welcome a deeper conversation with you about this. We will reach out to you to discuss.”*
 - Request to see what your organization is doing beyond posting on social media: *“We know that actions speak louder than words, here is a link to the concrete steps we’re taking to support the BIPOC community. [link]”*
 - Comment pointing out that all/most of your members are white or requesting the demographic breakdown of members: *“We acknowledge that we have a long way to go when it comes to building a truly diverse and representative BIA. We are committed to taking steps to create an equal business community, to start we will [ACTIONS].”* (If statistics are requested, provide them) - actions to consider:
 - Ensure any business recruitment initiatives focus on recruiting BIPOC-owned businesses.
 - Ensure BIPOC-owned businesses are represented at any special events or community programs (consider waiving any relevant fees).
 - Host a monthly “Pop Up” for a BIPOC-owned business at an available space or within member businesses.
 - BIPOC businesses to support in Toronto: <https://www.afrobiz.ca/Toronto>
 - Reassess all vendors and suppliers and commit 30% of supplier dollars to go to BIPOC-owned businesses.
 - Work toward adding additional Board seats specifically for BIPOC-owned businesses that operate in your BIA’s community but may not own property.

RESOURCES

- **Are you an employer looking for more education around diversity and inclusion within your organization?** Visit Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion: <https://ccdi.ca/>. They help their employer partners and individual members make significant differences in their organizational performance by providing them with the tools, knowledge and coaching to create more inclusive workplaces in Canada.
- **Looking to get involved in initiatives that support anti-racism in Toronto?** Toronto For All is a public education initiative to generate dialogue between Toronto residents in order to create a city that says “no” to all forms of discrimination and racism: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/toronto-for-all/>
- **Follow Black Lives Matter Toronto to learn about upcoming initiatives** - <https://blacklivesmatter.ca/>
- **Want to support and hire black owned businesses, get involved in events?** BBPA is a non-profit, charitable organization that addresses equity and opportunity for the Black community in business, employment, education and economic development: <https://bbpa.org/>

- **Want to hire a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion consultant for your organization?** Here are some suggestions:
 - Avery Francis: www.buildwithbloom.com (Toronto)
 - Cicely Blain <https://www.cicelyblainconsulting.com/> (Toronto)
- **Want to host an Implicit Bias Training for your organization?** Here are some suggestions:
 - Hamlin Grange: hamlin@diversipro.com
 - Naomi Gracechild: hello@euphony.works
- **Want to support black-owned businesses in Toronto?** Here are a few database:
 - Afrobiz: www.afrobiz.ca
 - Black Owned TO: <https://blackownedto.com/>
 - Black owned restaurants in Toronto via BlogTO: <https://www.blogto.com/city/2020/06/black-owned-restaurants-businesses-toronto/>
 - NOW Magazine: <https://nowtoronto.com/lifestyle/black-owned-businesses-toronto>
- **Want to learn more about how diversity within your company can lead to better profits?**
Read this Article: *More Evidence That Company Diversity Leads To Better Profits*
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/karstenstrauss/2018/01/25/more-evidence-that-company-diversity-leads-to-better-profits/#32cf6c671bc7>

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are hostile verbal, behavioral, or environmental insults or slurs that target People of Colour and Indigenous Communities. They are normalized, and are thus often not recognized as aggressive or inappropriate.

We encourage you to read this Article: *How Microaggressions Can Affect Wellbeing In The Workplace*
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/pragyaagarwaleurope/2019/03/29/how-microaggressions-can-affect-wellbeing-in-the-workplace/#5461907473cb>

EXAMPLES

“All Lives Matter.”

Why it's offensive: All lives do matter, but in this context it's black lives that seem to matter less when they're not being treated with respect.

To demonstrate the problem: If you were at a funeral that someone is mourning the death of a loved one and you say, "Yeah, but my grandmother died five years ago. All deaths matter."

“My boss is crazy.”

Why it's offensive: In addition to denoting mental illness as a negative, calling your female boss "crazy" or "hysterical" has sexist undertones, because these words have a long, problematic history.

When you call a woman "crazy," it suggests that her concerns or actions are illogical, rather than the result of critical thinking.

“Where are you from?”

Examples of similar microaggressions:

1. Where were you born?
2. You speak good English
3. Asking someone to teach you their native language

This implies that someone isn't Canadian or that they don't belong.

“You are so articulate!”

Example of a similar microaggression:

1. Asking a person of Asian descent to help you with a math or science problem

This implies a connection between race and intellect

“I don't see colour”

Example of a similar microaggression:

1. There is only race, the human race

This doesn't recognize people's racialized and marginalized experiences

“You're so beautiful for a trans woman!”

Examples of similar microaggressions:

1. I would have never known you were a man
2. There's no way that's real, can I touch?

Trans women are women. Comments that question this are offensive.

“As a woman, I understand your racialized experience.”

Example of a similar microaggression:

1. Women experience oppression, too

This implies that all marginalized experiences are the same.

“She's my spirit animal.”

Example of a similar microaggressions:

1. Let's have a pow wow about this
2. That's savage

This is cultural appropriation. These terms are Indigenous, and the first two are considered sacred.

Environmental microaggressions

Examples of a these microaggression:

1. Television shows that represent predominantly white, cis-het people
2. Buildings named after white, cis-het men
3. Overcrowding of public schools in communities of colour

If You've Said One of These Statements...

1. Accept and understand your error
2. Recognize a wide range of inequalities
3. Confront internalized prejudices by learning more about systemic oppression **and listen**

We must also be mindful of:

1. **Intersectionality** - people are not one thing
2. **What we consider 'normal'** - and where that idea comes from
3. **Privilege** - when we have it and what we do with it
4. **Tokenism** - and how we can avoid it

Communication Guidelines

When we talk about diversity, equity and inclusion, there are some concepts that we want to keep central. We want to encourage our community to think about systemic issues. Let’s point out and be conscious of the following:

We think about...	Because we understand that...
Diversity *and* inclusion	Our diversity is an asset - but only if we make and hold space for our differences, too.
Ableism	There are many practices and attitudes in society that assume there are ideal bodies and minds.
Accessibility	We want to design communication (both written and visual) that everyone can see and understand.
Dominant culture	There are dominant cultural beliefs, values, and traditions. These are often thought of as “normal” and, therefore, preferred and right. This often results in diverse ways of life being devalued, marginalized, and associated with low cultural capital. Conversely, in a multicultural society, various cultures are celebrated and respected equally.
Implicit bias	People hold beliefs that they don’t know about. We work to recognize our own biases and correct them.
Intersectionality	Social categorizations, such as race, class, and gender, create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. We understand that there are layers of diversity & inclusion.
Privilege	We do our best to acknowledge our own privilege - and the power dynamics that stem from privilege.
Pronouns	People can choose their pronouns. Period.
Tokenism	This is the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to build an inclusive environment. This often shows up as recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of equality within a workforce. We are mindful of this and guard against it.

There are also terms and expressions that we don’t want to use. The following table provides an overview of how we want to communicate and words that we will avoid. As you move through the table, we hope that you won’t invite yourself into shame about the language you may have used in the past. Instead, take this as a starting point to how you want to communicate in the future.

We don’t say...	We say and use...
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A person is not defined by their descriptor, don't lead with it (i.e. disabled person, coloured person)	<p>People-first language (i.e. people with ADHD, a person who is visually impaired, etc.)</p> <p>There are some exceptions to this rule (i.e. a Black person and Indigenous Peoples)</p>
Aboriginal, indigenous (always capitalize), Indian, native	Indigenous Peoples (includes status and non-status First Nation, Metis and Inuit)
Avoid mental illnesses or conditions unless confirmed and necessary. If required, ensure that you're using the right term (i.e. confirmed OCD and not someone who is particular in nature). Don't use terms like crazy, schizophrenic, psycho or paranoid	<p>Neurodiversity</p> <p>People with mental illnesses/disabilities/conditions</p>
Chief	<p>Band Chief or Hereditary Chief</p> <p><i>Note: These have different meanings. A Band Chief is elected every 2 years as a requirement under the Indian Act. The Hereditary Chief is an intergenerational leadership role that has power passed down along bloodlines and cultural protocols.</i></p>
Complimenting people for weight loss	Let's keep it body positive
Culture fit	Values fit
Drug user	Person/people who use drugs
Eskimo	Inuit for three or more; Inuk for one person; Inuuk for two people
Ethnic, visible minority, coloured person, not-white	<p>BIPOC; Black, Indigenous and people of colour</p> <p><i>Note: People's experiences can be racialized (such as racialized violence) however people cannot.</i></p>
Ethnic media	Multicultural media
Exotic (referring to a person)	<p>Identify whether this is necessary.</p> <p><i>Note: People often exoticize (and eroticize) people of colour, which is problematic.</i></p>
Gay, homosexual	LGBTQ2S+, (with the right audience, 'a member of the queer community')
Gendered language (i.e. men & women/ ladies & guys)	This is rarely necessary. Consider genderless terms like folks, team, etc.
Grandfather clause	Older rules/policies apply

	<i>Note: This was originally a clause that denied African Americans the right to vote.</i>
Gypped	Swindled
Handicapped, disabled person	People with physical or non-visible disabilities
Housekeeping	Maintenance, Clean-up
Indigenization	Support truth & reconciliation <i>Note: never split the 'truth' from 'reconciliation'</i>
Karen	Avoid <i>Note: This expression has been used more recently to denote racist, difficult or privileged, older white women. Although it's important to call out (or call in) racist statements made by people, this term is complicated by its ageist implications.</i>
Lame	Uncool
Long time no see	I haven't seen you in a while <i>Note: This expression was originally made popular as a way to make fun of Indigenous people. The phrase was used as a way to mock a traditional greeting exchanged between Native Americans.</i>
Manpower	Workforce, power
Monogamy assumptions	Some people are polyamorous or uncoupled. Don't assume family dynamics
Migrant, illegal alien	Refugee, asylum seeker
Minorities	Marginalized groups, underrepresented groups
Mixed race, mulatto, half-breed	Bi-racial people, multi-racial individuals, Metis peoples
No can do	That's not possible <i>Note: This expression was originally made popular as a way to make fun of Chinese immigrants. It is an imitation of Chinese Pidgin English.</i>
Normal	Typical
Oriental	This will depend on the context. Consider people of Asian descent, a person from Japan, etc.

Peanut gallery	Areas with less access
Poor, homeless, low income, at-risk, vulnerable	People experiencing homelessness or people with lower incomes
Pow Wow	Meeting
Savage	Bad, horrible <i>Note: This was a word used by White people to describe Indigenous peoples.</i>
Sex, gender	Gender identity
Spirit Animal	Patronus, Daemon
That's gay	Do not use 'gay' as a derogatory term. Avoid linking something that is bad to the LGBTQ community
Thug	Ask yourself is this negative framing is necessary, or if we could rephrase
Transgendered	<u>Transgender</u> , trans, trans man, trans woman <i>Note: Try and denote both trans and cis. Don't promote the notion that trans people are those who receive labels.</i>
Translator	Sign-language interpreter. <i>Note: If you're communicating with someone who uses an interpreter, maintain your eye contact with the person with whom you're talking (not the interpreter).</i>
Tribe	Team, colleagues, group, community
Victimhood language (i.e. rape victim, suffers from, afflicted by)	Survivor language (i.e. survivor of sexualized violence)
What are you? Where are you 'really' from?	This question is likely not necessary and is often racist and hurtful. Refrain from asking.
You still have time. You look great for your age. You're still working? When are you going to retire?	These statements are likely not necessary and often ageist and hurtful. Refrain from these types of comments and questions.